

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Lotus Metro wins on fast track

A new program for personal computers called Lotus Metro has more bells and whistles than any multifunction, memory-resident program that I've seen. Published by the same folks that make Lotus 1-2-3, the blockbuster spreadsheet best-seller, Metro combines into one slick package the major functions of many other memory-resident programs such as SideKick and its competitors.

In fact, with 13 major functions, it's quickly becoming the Cadillac of all memory-resident programs. Just one of its features — the Phone Book — stands out to such an extent that it's worth buying the program for it alone.

You can use the Phone Book to maintain up to 2,000 entries — one to each simulated 3-by-5 card, which will appear on your screen almost instantly. After you enter a name and phone number on the top

line of a card, both are automatically transferred to an on-screen index when the card is saved. When you want to retrieve a card, you simply highlight the name in the index with your cursor and press Return. The card will appear in a flash.

Each card contains up to seven lines of 60 characters. Whatever you enter appears on the card whenever it is retrieved, and it is saved automatically when you return to the main index.

Lotus Metro can be used for the names of business contacts, customers, suppliers or miscellaneous information such as project status reports, client comments or number of follow-ups. Like Lotus 1-2-3, the program that became so popular because you could invent your own uses for it, the Phone Book feature of this program is only limited by your imagination.



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Here are some of the features I liked:

✓ You can view your cards while you're working on any other program. This is possible because the program is RAM-resident, with all the data in your computer's memory. If one of your clients calls you while you are writing a letter using the computer, you can access their card by pressing Shift-Alt-P without leaving your application program.

✓ If you forget a name or number, you still easily can find the card by searching for a string of characters. If your nameless client is from Chicago, you can tell the program to call up cards beginning with Chicago's area code — 312.

✓ A command called Only creates a subindex that contains only the index cards that have a string that you define. In the example above, all cards having the 312 area code can be listed in the subindex.

✓ The program also allows Hayes-compatible modem users to automatically dial the telephone

numbers listed.

For experienced users, Lotus Metro has a variety of other features: You can schedule appointments; make mathematical calculations; edit memos and letters; interact with DOS without leaving an application program, and transfer data from one place to another within Metro or to another application. You can also create macros — a series of keystrokes and commands executed by pressing a single key or key combination.

On the down side, the program is expensive at \$85, and it requires at least 80 kilobytes of memory.

The bottom line: The Phone Book feature of Lotus Metro is luxurious to use and a clear productivity-enhancer for business use. I recommend it highly, despite its high cost.

Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant and author of the monthly Executive Computing Newsletter, published by the Association of Computer Users, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.